

THE DANGERS OF USING A FLEXI-LEASH

By Anne Thometz

I have just experienced a greyhound owner's worst nightmare. My new dog Onix, got away from me while I was walking him at night. He took off like a bolt of lightning, faster than my eyes could even follow. Calling his name and chasing after him were both futile. What he was running from was still attached to his neck and it was literally chasing him away from me. It was the Flexi-leash. He had bumped it out of my hand and it hit the ground with a loud crash. He got startled by the noise and began to run. The further he ran, the more noise it made. He had no intention of calming down or listening to me. Anything I said, just added to the noise and commotion. He was scared out of his wits and so was I. He disappeared into the darkness at a rate of speed no one could possibly catch up with. I was completely devastated and could only hope that he would slow down from exhaustion or get caught on something before reaching a busy street. But the sight of him running that fast left me with very little hope.

How foolish of me to think this would never happen, just because it worked so well with my first greyhound. His stress level was not that high though, and nothing ever scared him. Looking back, that was still no reason to take such a risk. What if he chased a cat or got overly excited? What if he simply did not feel like coming back when I called? What if he got confused or turned around? Well I found out the answer last Saturday night.

Sue was on her way over and I was talking (okay, sobbing) to Joyce on the phone when the call came in. Onix was at emergency. He had been hit by a car. I went right over and when I walked in, they had just finished "MOPPING UP the blood" on the floor. I got the impression they really hurried to get this done before I showed up. The pictures in my mind were already far worse than that floor could have possibly been, but I appreciated the effort and just hoped for a better outcome than I imagined.

The Animal Control lady who picked him up said that his paws were bleeding a lot, but she couldn't say much more than that. They were still working on him, so I asked her for more details while I waited. She told me that a security guard at Target called her, saying Onix had been hit and then ran underneath a parked van. His leash got caught under the tire and then tangled up until he was unable to move. They had to jack up the van and cut the leash to get him out. What did I say about a busy street? Even the parking lots at Target are busy. But the street in front? Well I could not imagine a worse place for a dog to be hit.

Someone was definitely on our side this time. It turned out that the only injuries were to the pads of his feet. They were badly scraped from running on the pavement. When he first got loose, he ran with such strength, I could hear how hard his feet pounded the ground. So this type of injury was not surprising. What did surprise me was that he had NO other injuries! They kept him overnight, did blood tests, x-rays, etc., and did not find anything else wrong. What a lucky guy!!

Later on that week, I spoke with the security guard at Target. It turns out he did not actually see him get hit by a car, but assumed from his bleeding paws, that he had been hit. Another stroke of luck that I count my lucky stars for. I don't think I have any left now.

Flexi-leashes are not safe for greyhounds, regardless of what type of personality they have. The simple fact that you can not maintain a good enough grip 100 percent of the time, along with the noise they make after you drop them, is enough to tell you the danger involved in using one. For anyone who currently has one, please do your dog and yourself a big favor. Throw it out or give it away. Use a regular leash, put your hand through the loop, wrap it around your wrist and keep it that way. It's the only way you can be sure your dog will be safe and happy.

A big thanks to Joyce and Sue and anyone else I spoke with that night. I should mention that not having my name and number on his collar certainly did not help matters and could have saved you all some time. I knew better than that. I am grateful for everything you did for me and my beautiful boy. He's not exactly thrilled with his situation right now, but he has no idea how truly lucky he is to even be here today. One more week in boxing gloves and he should be good as new.

